

Working towards a cross-European Coalition for Vaccination

(21 March 2019) On 4 March 2019, DG SANTE had invited to a first meeting of a "Coalition for Vaccination" (cf. [agenda of the meeting](#)). The rationale behind organising this event was "to bring together European associations of healthcare workers as well as relevant students' associations in the field, to commit to delivering accurate information to the public, combating myths and exchanging best practice". This new EC initiative has to be seen on the backdrop of failing vaccine confidence - largely due to misinformation, despite the demonstrated benefits of many kinds of vaccination - and a drop in vaccine coverage rates throughout Europe that can be attributed mainly to restricted access, health illiteracy and/or too high costs.

The main purpose of the meeting was to assess the interest and commitment of key stakeholders for the creation of such a "Coalition of Vaccinators" and to reach agreement on the most appropriate structure, thematic scope, governance and link to other existing initiatives (such as e.g. the [Joint Action on Vaccination](#)), programmes, etc. The participants currently wait for follow-up information by DG SANTE on a number of points in relation to these four aspects. EPSU participated in the meeting, alongside representatives of other organisations such as EFN (European Federation of Nurses Associations), CPME (Standing Committee of European Doctors), EMA (European Midwives Associations), PGEU (Pharmaceutical Group in the EU), ESNO (European Special Nurses Organisation), HOSPEEM and HOPE.

The idea for such a coalition in order to improve the EU-wide cooperation and coordination on vaccination is included in the Council [Recommendation](#) of 7 December 2018 on strengthened [cooperation](#) against vaccine-preventable diseases. It comprises three main pillars: 1) tackling vaccine hesitancy and improving vaccination coverage, 2) sustainable vaccination policies in the EU and 3) EU coordination and contribution to global health. The recommendation 1) insists on targeted outreach towards vulnerable groups when it comes to protection by vaccination, 2) calls to strengthen vaccination training in medical curricula for

different health professionals, in particular doctors and nurses, and 3) promotes the establishment of electronic vaccination records for all EU citizens.

On a first stakeholder panel Jacques de Haller, CPME former President. Michal Byliniak, President of PGEU and Elizabeth Adams, EFN President, intervened as keynote speakers. Jacques de Haller recalled that medicine is a science that has proven that vaccination works and should be supported. Health professionals also needed to be vaccinated, their non-vaccination would be an "ethical failure". He also regretted that it is difficult to revoke fake news on the risks of vaccination and on vaccination hesitancy. Elizabeth Adams, also working with EPSU's Irish affiliate INMO, stressed the importance of nurses' contribution to frontline impact. She invited to take account of the insights and good practices contained in the [EFN Report on Nurses' Competencies in Prevention](#), issued in April 2018, which contains a comparative overview of 35 European countries. She highlighted the need to transpose and replicate the activities of the Coalition for Vaccination at national level by also using money from the EU Health Programme. The EFN report informs that "less than 3% of OECD countries' health budgets is allocated to prevention programmes, of which less than 10% is for immunisation." (p. 4) It highlights that "spending on prevention took a significant hit following the global financial crisis, the tragic consequences of which are only now being realised. The consequences of low uptakes of certain kinds of vaccination can be damaging to the health and economic welfare of vulnerable citizens across Europe, and by extension to their families and wider communities." (p. 4). It also recalls that "nurses are the frontline staff largely responsible for delivering safe and effective vaccination programmes to communities across Europe, yet rarely get formal recognition for this life-saving endeavour." (p. 4) EPSU shares the views, proposals and demands expressed by the representatives of CPME and EFN during the meeting.

You can read here the [letter](#) addressed to the participants of the meeting by Dr. Vytenis Andriukaitis, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, and a [background paper](#) on the "Coalition for Vaccination" issued by DG SANTE prior to the event.

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